

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

Service-learning is a method through which citizenship, academic subject skills, and character are taught. Participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of the community. In 1994 our school district began implementing service-learning as a viable way of using the surrounding community as a means for creating real-life experiences for our students. Since that time, our program has evolved into a model program.

In creating our service-learning program, our objectives were:

1. To assist students in identifying and developing their roles in society in preparation for the future workplace .
2. To instill in our students that all people have value.
3. To increase community participation in the educational, emotional, and social development of the student.
4. To promote service-learning in the school as an authentic learning strategy which links the core curriculum standards to meet intended learning outcomes.

The school's service-learning program is innovative and promotes high student achievement. Each service-learning project includes the four components as outlined by the Corporation for National Service. Prior to any project, teachers and students are required to assess community needs. Following the assessment, they then complete the preparation stage through training and the gathering or creating of necessary materials. In the second phase, the students complete the project. This phase is followed by reflection. The teacher guides the students through project and self-evaluation. Celebration follows reflection, which includes recognition from the school as well as the recipients of the service.

Our school's first community partner was the United Way. Working closely with one of their funded institutions, and a neighboring school district, we created a horticulture therapy program for a private school that educates isolated physically and mentally challenged children. Our students worked as a team with volunteers from the school, a local business, and community volunteers in transforming an unusable weeded backyard area into a beautiful patio garden with raised planters to accommodate wheel-chair bound students. Our woodshop students then renovated the facility's kitchen to make the cabinets and sink areas easily accessible for students in wheelchairs. This school-wide program is called **"We're Making A Difference"** and due to student response, we now provide weekly student volunteers for four private county facilities that educate 260 mentally and physically challenged children and young adults. Students volunteering for this service-learning program are those who are seeking careers in the medical field, health professions, education, or in the social services. For example, dental hygiene students participate in this program to gain experience and sensitivity in preparation for treating the disabled in the dental office. The program introduces our students to varying disabilities while teaching them humanity. They also learn that those with disabilities also have abilities. Our partnership extends beyond sending volunteers. Because a facility has

no music program or musical instruments, our choir and band members perform for holiday occasions and encourage the children to experiment with sound using various instruments. A science class completes a horticulture project by weeding and planting flowers and shrubs donated by a local business around a facility in the spring. A cooking class invites handicapped students over to our school for a joint cooking lesson. Art students draw children's murals on walls of a center depicting children with and without disabilities interacting together. Our end of the year project includes working closely with the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation. Students disseminate health pamphlets, work registration tables, and the school has raised \$7,000 over the past 3 years for "Walk America". Students keep journals in preparation for reflection and self-growth. Celebrations include spring planting festivals and recognition certificates.

Our school-wide **"Youth to Youth"** program is also open to all students. Students volunteering to serve in this program are generally interested in the teaching profession, or those careers that will involve working with young children. In addition, many students choose this program because they are seeking self-improvement in the areas of communication, responsibility, leadership, and parenting. Student volunteers are assigned to work with elementary teachers in the grade level of their choice. Students volunteer on a weekly basis providing elementary school teachers with teacher assistants, mentors and individual tutors. Additional "Youth to Youth" activities include, a pen-pal literacy intergenerational program with a language arts teacher which includes the creation of children's storybooks on the theme of **"Humanity"**. These books are read to their pen-pals during "Read Across America". Elementary school pen-pals reciprocate by creating stories focusing on **"Good Character"** and then reading to their high school pen-pals during "National Library Week". Math classes create jeopardy games for elementary children and teach math skills as a review for the state test. A Polish ESL class practices reading fairy tales and reads to elementary ESL children on a monthly basis. There are also intergenerational projects. For instance, a biology class studies the aging process and then serves as pen-pals in an "Adopt A Grandparent" program with a local nursing home. Celebration includes a prom and an intergenerational cookout.

2. **List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standards. Provide an example to substantiate your response.**

The school's service-learning program is broad-based and all of the projects include interdisciplinary components as well as workplace readiness standards.

- **Students volunteering on a weekly basis at schools for the handicapped:**
careers, adaptive equipment, decision-making, self-management,safety:CCWR1-5
music therapy,arts,crafts:Arts1.2,1.6; health, prevention, March of Dimes:CH2.1-3
journals,oral-reflection,instructing:LAL3.23.3,3.5;diversity,laws,cultures:SS 6.1
6.2,6.4;horticulture:Sci. 5.12

- **“Youth to Youth” program with elementary school children**
(careers, students volunteer in all academic areas, tutoring, mentoring, reading creating lunchtime activities, keeping journals, oral discussions)
CCWR 1-5; Art 1.1,1.2;CH 2.5,2.6; AL 3.1,3.5; M4.1-4.12, S5.1,5.12; SS 6.1,4,5
- **Math Jeopardy project with elementary school children**
(researching math skills, teamwork in the creation of jeopardy gameboards creating problems with varying levels of difficulty, teaching students,evaluating project, oral reflection)
CCWR 1-4; Arts1.6;CH 2.5,2.6; LAL 3.3;M 4.1,4.4,4.8,4.14;S S 6.1,6.4
- **Language Arts Intergenerational Writers Literacy Pen-Pal Project**
(analyzing themes from novel unit, creating children’s stories focusing on the theme “Man’s Inhumanity to Man” , teamwork, using technology to create invitations to read, creating supplemental learning activities for each story, oral presentation of stories self and project evaluation, creating educational and character activities for Learn and Serve Character Counts Field Day).
CCWR 1-5; Arts 1.5; CH & PE 2.2, 2.5, 2.6; LAL 3.1,3.2,3.3,3.5; S 5.2,5.11, 5.12; SS 6.2

3. **Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met the needs.**

The educational needs of students that the practice addresses are:

1. A need to increase their experiential background
2. The need to gain confidence and improve self-image
3. To be involved in motivating activities that connect academic learning with the community
4. To learn the importance of good character, citizenship, and the rewards of giving back

The school has always used a variety of assessment measures to monitor the success of our service-learning program. Assessment materials include: the use of journals containing objective and subjective data, student questionnaires, surveys, writing assignments, needs assessments, evaluation forms, group discussions, video-taped activities. The school began its service-learning program in 1994 with approximately 18 students. Current data signifies that more than 500 students participate in some type of service-learning activity during the course of the school year.

Students seeking to volunteer in “special needs” facilities and in the “Youth to Youth” program complete assessments signifying the skills that they hope to acquire. One-third of the student volunteers are looking for career exposure. More than 90% mention that they seek participation to: learn responsibility, develop listening and communication skills, teamwork, patience, develop leadership qualities, increase self-esteem and gain respect, parenting skills, people skills, and finally, to make a difference in a child’s life.

Upon completion of the school year, 100% of the volunteers who completed the program stated that their communication and people skills were enhanced and that they felt they had made an impact on the children at their volunteer site. Students described very positive interactions with children and staff based upon how warmly they were greeted during each visit. Students also voiced opinions that many gained positive knowledge concerning the intelligence/abilities/challenges of the disadvantaged population. Elementary staff and administration at private facilities highlighted positive endeavors such as peer socialization, building community awareness, partnerships, team building, and the blending of social and academic skills. Parents described the program as “extremely motivating” after observing students actively engaged in service. One hundred percent of the teachers who worked with their students to create service-learning projects recorded that student reaction was positive and that curriculum standards had been met. Completed projects such as completed murals and storybooks also signified that objectives had been met. Content and quality of pen-pal letters showed notable improvements in writing skills.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

Since the school serves as a peer mentor in the area of service-learning and has been recognized as a national service-learning leader school, we are readily available to provide assistance to any school district seeking to replicate this practice. Prepared materials can be easily sent to any inquiring district. **Recommendations would include:**

1. For training assistance, contact the National Youth Leadership Council or The Department of Education to obtain information on the nearest peer mentor or Service-Learning Leader school near you.
2. Form a service-learning committee comprised of representatives from all academic areas, student government, parent associations, supervisors and administration. (include community partners once relationships are established).
3. Develop needs assessments for your students, teachers and community partners.
4. Based on your assessments, choose the projects and community partners that will best suit the objectives you have established in meeting the needs of your students while having an impact on your community. If funding is a problem, choose projects that do not require a great deal of busing or materials (our handicapped children project works because our district has its own buses).
If you are interested in working with the handicapped, plan activities where they can periodically be brought to your school.
5. Start out small. Train interested teachers and encourage them to create their own projects. Be certain they guide their students through each stage of service-learning (preparation, action, reflection, celebration). Include addressing workplace readiness skills and at least four core curriculum content areas.
6. Publicize your projects. Send out press releases. Tell your “success stories”.
7. Recognize your students with certificates, and end-of-the year celebrations.
8. Create assessment tools to evaluate and measure the success of your program.